IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the following claims which are pending in the present application:

1. (Currently Amended) In a messaging system, a method for restoring media items to an original quality, the method comprising:

upon receipt of a message containing a~~n original~~ media item that is new, storing the ~~original~~ media item at an original quality in a repository;

generating an identifier for identifying the ~~original~~ media item stored in the repository;

replacing the ~~original~~ media item in the message with a lower quality substitute copy that includes said identifier; and

upon future encounter of the lower quality substitute copy of the ~~a particular~~ media item having said identifier, restoring the ~~particular~~ media item to the original quality using said identifier.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said original media item comprises a component in user-composed messages.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said messaging system comprises Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS).

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said replacing step

includes:

using an available data communications channel that exists for encoding said original media item, in order to encode said identifier.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said restoring step includes: as the message containing the substitute copy passes through a switching center, restoring the particular media item to original quality by the switching center using the identifier to obtain the original media item stored in the repository.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said restoring step includes: restoring the particular media item back to a first generation copy.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said messaging system comprises a message switch-based system.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said messaging system is able to allow transmission of a given media item in its original quality or decimate the given media item, as required for a given destination.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the message containing an original media is received from a mobile terminal.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the mobile terminal communicates via a multimedia messaging protocol.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said identifier comprises an object reference identifier.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said object reference identifier is capable of being embedded in the particular media item.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the object reference identifier is embedded in a header of the particular media item.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein said particular media item comprises a JPEG image, and wherein the object reference identifier is embedded in a header for the JPEG image.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identifier is embedded in the substitute copy as a binary text string.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the binary text string contains sufficient information to allow retrieval of a copy of the

original media item stored in the repository.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identifier employed for the particular media item depends on the particular media item's type.

18. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said restoring step includes: scanning incoming media items for any preexisting identifiers.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising:

if an incoming media item does not have a preexisting identifier, assigning a new identifier for that incoming media item.

20. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

removing from the repository any media item that is stale.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein said removing step includes applying an aging mechanism to determine media items that are stale.

22. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identifier is embedded in a digital watermark employed for the particular media item.

23. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said particular media item comprises an image, and wherein the identifier is embedded in a digital watermark for the image.

24. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identifier is embedded in a digital watermark for the substitute copy, said identifier be embedded as a binary text string.

25. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein steps of the method are performed at a server computer that connects to mobile terminals.

26. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least some steps of the method are performed at mobile terminals, for providing distributed processing.

27. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said message is transmitted via the Internet from a client device to a server.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the client device connects to the Internet via wireless connectivity.

29. (Original) A computer-readable medium having processor-

executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

30. (Original) A downloadable set of processor-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

31. (Previously Presented) A system for restoring media items to original quality, the system comprising:

a messaging system capable of transmitting multimedia messages;

a repository for storing the original media item upon receipt of a message containing an original media item that is new;

a module for generating an identifier for identifying the original media item stored in the repository;

a module for replacing the original media item in the message with a substitute copy that includes said identifier; and

a module for restoring the particular media item to the original quality using said identifier.

32. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said original media item comprises a component in user-composed messages.

33. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said messaging system comprises Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS).

34. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said module for replacing includes: module for using an available data communications channel that exists for encoding said original media item, in order to encode said identifier.

35. 35. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said module for restoring includes:

module, residing at a switching center, for restoring the particular media item to original quality using the identifier to obtain the original media item stored in the repository.

36. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said module for restoring includes: module for restoring the particular media item back to a first generation copy.

37. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said messaging system comprises a message switch-based system.

38. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said messaging system is able to allow transmission of a given media item in its original quality or decimate the given media item, as required for a given destination.

39. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the message

containing an original media is received from a mobile terminal.

40. (Original) The system of claim 39, wherein the mobile terminal communicates via a multimedia messaging protocol.

41. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said identifier comprises an object reference identifier.

42. (Original) The system of claim 41, wherein said object reference identifier is capable of being embedded in the particular media item.

43. (Original) The system of claim 42, wherein the object reference identifier is embedded in a header of the particular media item.

44. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein said particular media item comprises a JPEG image, and wherein the object reference identifier is embedded in a header for the JPEG image.

45. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the identifier is embedded in the substitute copy as a binary text string.

46. (Original) The system of claim 45, wherein the binary text

string contains sufficient information to allow retrieval of a copy of the original media item stored in the repository.

47. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the identifier employed for the particular media item depends on the particular media item's type.

48. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said module for restoring includes: module for scanning incoming media items for any preexisting identifiers.

49. (Original) The system of claim 48, further comprising:

module for assigning a new identifier for that incoming media item, if an incoming media item does not have a preexisting identifier.

50. (Original) The system of claim 31, further comprising: module for removing from the repository any media item that is stale.

51. (Original) The system of claim 50, wherein said module for removing includes applying an aging mechanism to determine media items that are stale.

52. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the identifier is embedded in a digital watermark employed for the particular media

item.

53. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said particular media item comprises an image, and wherein the identifier is embedded in a digital watermark for the image.

54. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the identifier is embedded in a digital watermark for the substitute copy, said identifier be embedded as a binary text string.

55. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein certain modules reside at a server computer that connects to mobile terminals.

56. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein at least some modules reside at mobile terminals, for providing distributed processing.

57. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said message is transmitted via the Internet from a client device to a server.

58. (Original) The system of claim 57, wherein the client device connects to the Internet via wireless connectivity.